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ABSTRACT

This document describes the 3-year Parent-Child Early Education Program which was designed to train teachers to work with young children. Basically, the staff development project attempted to devise a plan by which the teachers changed their perception of themselves and their role as teachers mainly through inservice training. A four-step process of staff development was initiated: (1) Identifying Needs, (2) Establishing Goals, (3) Selecting Activities, and (4) Evaluating Results. The establishment and evolution of each step of the program are described. The results indicate that the various forms of inservice were effective. (CS)

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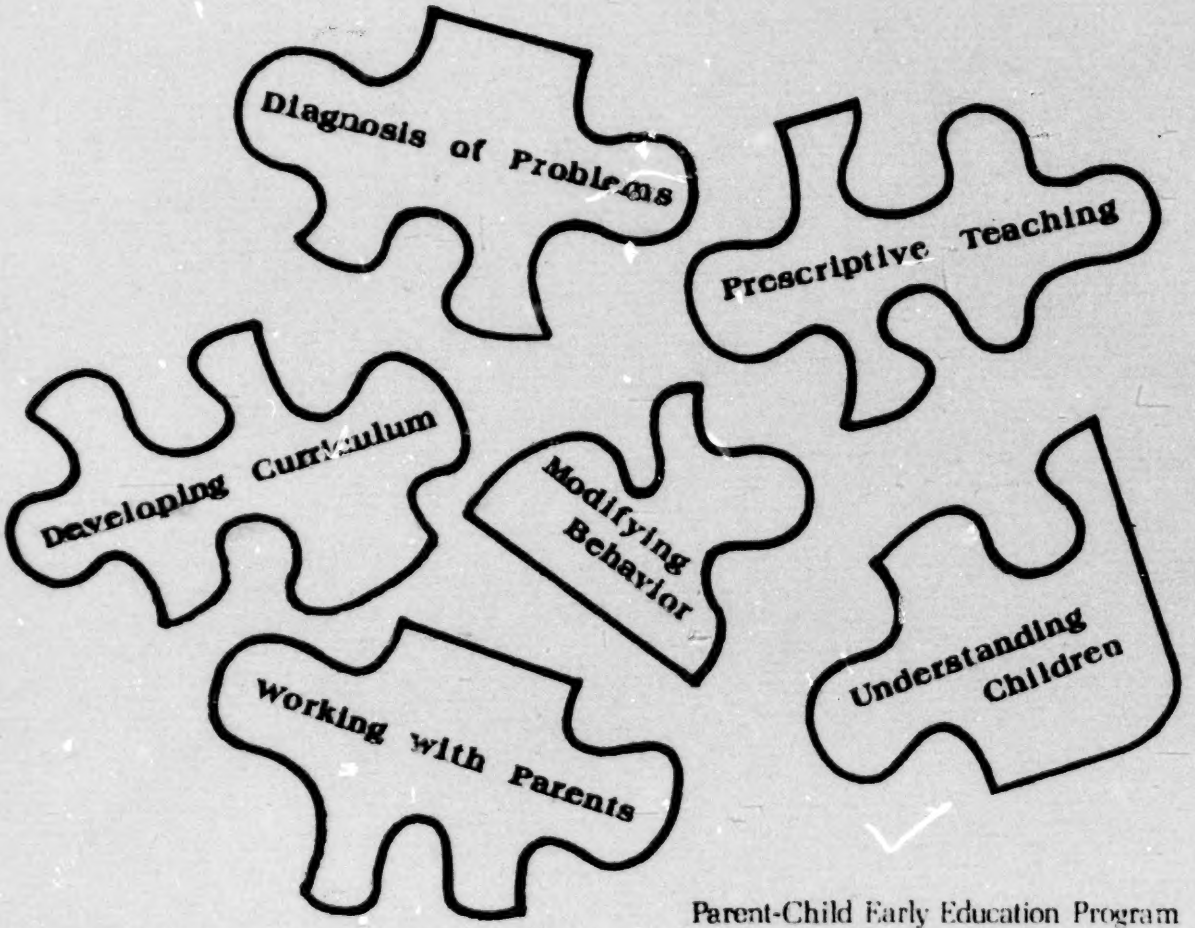
Putting Together

A STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS



Parent-Child Early Education Program
Ferguson-Florissant School District

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A STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

FOR

PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

Parent-Child Early Education Program
Title III, ESEA, Sec. 306
Ferguson-Florissant School District
Ferguson, Missouri

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Puzzled about building a staff development program for teachers in early education? Let us share with you what we in the Ferguson-Florissant School District, Ferguson, Missouri, have done to provide training for teachers involved in the Parent-Child Early Education Program, Title III, ESEA 306, for four year olds.

Background

In 1971, the school district received a three-year grant under Title III, ESEA, to develop an early education program. At that time, it was decided that an early learning program must work closely with the family if it was to be of maximum benefit to the young child. Therefore, a model for early education was developed which incorporated specific objectives for both the child and parent. Consideration was also given to the diagnosis and treatment of children considered to have various handicaps, including educational, behavioral, and physical difficulties. In addition, it was considered essential to construct staff inservice which would assist in developing the major objectives of the program and,

secondly, train teachers of early education since the colleges and universities in the area provided relatively little course work in the field.

This monograph is intended to describe the process involved in developing a staff to work with young children. Inherent in our whole plan for staff development was the belief that working together as involved and committed people over a period of time, we could develop skills and abilities which would be of mutual benefit to parents and children.

In defining the objectives for the federal proposal, specific objectives were set for staff. Since some of the objectives dealt with areas uncommon to most teachers, and the majority of staff members were former teachers, it was imperative to set up staff development which would evolve with the program. Basically, we needed to devise a plan by which teachers changed their perception of themselves and their role as teachers, so that they could meet the needs of the Parent-Child Early Education Program.

James Lipham, in his model which analyzes the dynamics of curriculum change, indicates that teacher behavior is affected by four different pressures. He sees forces that inhibit change to include: the fact that change requires hard work; there is no measure of its

success; there is no extrinsic reward; and it may make some enemies. Forces which aid change, however, include: the fact that change provides role focus; there is a halo effect from publicity; there is some extrinsic reward; and one may gain some friends. The Lipham model contends that inservice education programs must attempt to maximize the forces which will enhance change and minimize the forces which inhibit change. This, of course, is no easy matter since the forces working against change appear much more potent than the forces facilitating change. Proper involvement of the participants may be the key to successful development of a program. Perhaps the two words involvement and committment summarize best the staff development program in the Parent-Child Early Education Program. When inservice programs engage the participants in activities which will affect later behavior, the chances for a successful program will increase.

Therefore, the following end results for the inservice work were expected:

1) Teachers working together will be motivated toward common goals. Stating various viewpoints can have startling results which may effect the identification of common interests.
2) Teachers working together will prepare a sequence of cognitive skills and develop curriculum so that the

instructional program will be improved and individualized instruction will be provided.

3) Teachers working together will arrive at solutions to problems. Sharing of ideas and techniques will permit alternatives to situations that otherwise seem overwhelming.

4) New ideas and procedures will be tested, modified, and thoroughly implemented into the program.

5) Accountability of staff will be improved through the effectiveness of teachers to diagnose the individual child's need and prescribe activities to assist in learning.

6) Teachers, in increasing their skill in working with parents, will gain a better view of themselves as teachers.

Staff development for the Parent-Child Early Education Program had certain goals, but we were conscious of the fact that goals are of little value if a process for attaining them is not viable and functioning.

Harris and Bessent identified three areas in which serious mistakes are often made when inservice programs are planned and executed.

1) Failure to relate inservice plans to the genuine needs of staff. Often careful evaluation

is not undertaken to determine the degree to which needs are met and/or the extent to which other needs have been identified as a result of the program.

2) Failure to select appropriate activities for implementing program plans. Activities must be diverse and paced according to participants' progress.

3) Failure to implement inservice program activities with sufficient staff and other resources to assure effectiveness.

As the Parent-Child Early Education staff inservice program developed, we were cognizant of these errors and throughout the project period sought ways of adapting inservice to the needs of the group at a particular time.

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Description of the Staff Development Program

As mentioned previously, the staff development program for the Parent-Child Early Education staff has been successful because of the process developed and the built-in aspects of staff training. The following information describes the program, its practicality, process and potential for other inservice work.

Four steps are involved in the process and are summarized as follows:

. IDENTIFYING NEEDS

. ESTABLISHING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

. SELECTING ACTIVITIES

. EVALUATING RESULTS

Identifying Needs

Needs must be identified by the group involved if staff development is to be successful. As participants in planning decide upon a need, it may be inferred that there is a commitment to that need. However, leadership must also be provided to stimulate interest and assist the staff in seeking out and recognizing problems.

Through the three years of the Parent-Child Early Education Program, staff development has been built on needs of the staff at a given time. At the beginning of the project it was necessary to train all teachers in test administration; to involve them in curriculum development; and to develop in them skills for working with children and parents. As the project has developed, the original needs are still basic, but greater emphasis has been placed on certain areas. Essentially over a period of time given a fairly constant group of teachers, various areas of concern are emphasized, based on the growth of the teacher and consequently of the program.

Katz indicates that there are developmental stages of the preschool teacher. By the end of the first year, Stage I, the teacher has decided that she is capable of surviving and has acquired a baseline of information about what young children are like and what to expect of them.

During Stage II, teachers usually begin to focus on individual problem children and problem situations. In line with this, they tend to use a wider range of resources to assist them, such as supportive school personnel. Finally, in the third stage, the teacher begins to question: "Why am I doing this? What are some of the new materials, techniques, approaches and ideas?"

At this stage in the development of our program, the majority of teachers, especially those who have worked in the program since its inception, are at Level II and III. By nature of the program, as will be described later, much emphasis in the program has been focused on individual problem children.

Initially the needs of the program, such as diagnosis, curriculum establishment and working with parents, determined the inservice. Then after working with the staff and based upon the interest of the group, certain other areas of need were identified. An example of this is necessary. During year II of operation, it was determined that teachers were over-referring children as speech cases. In fact, some 47 children were referred for speech therapy. At the beginning of year III, inservice concerning speech development of young children was given, including opportunity for staff to record speech errors of a young child. As a result only 16 children were referred this year, and

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the referrals were of an accurate nature whereby children could benefit by assistance.

Another example is worthy of note. During program year II, several inservice sessions pertained to language development and teaching beginning reading. In program year III, because of expressed need of the teachers, we have emphasized motor development. Three inservice sessions presented in lecture and demonstration format have focused on the motor development of young children and methods of developing gross and fine motor skills.

Teachers have had the opportunity to express their needs in many ways. Questionnaires at the middle and end of the second year have addressed themselves to this concern and formal teacher evaluations, along with the setting of performance targets, have provided guidelines for building staff expertise.

Establishing Goals and Objectives

Identification of needs determines the specific objectives of an inservice program. Initially, these objectives were developed for the staff in the original project objectives.

1) 1. Each Parent-Child Early Education teacher will utilize appropriate motivational techniques (e.g., reinforcement and feedback strategies) for environmentally dis-

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advantaged and handicapped pupils. By the end of the first year of project operation, each Parent-Child Early Education teacher will be rated at least a "four" on a five-point rating scale as assessed by the Project Director through classroom observations.

2. Each Parent-Child Early Education teacher will be able to correctly identify learning problems due to emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, experiential deprivation, physical handicaps, and mental retardation on the basis of observation of pupils in the learning situation. Evidence of correct identification will be demonstrated by the accuracy of their referrals as judged by the Consultant Specialists for the Handicapped.

3. For those Parent-Child Early Education pupils identified through further diagnostic procedures as having learning problems due to emotional disturbance etc., teachers will carry out prescriptions (individualized materials and/or teaching techniques) made by the Consultant Specialists for the Handicapped. Through systematic observations, the specialists will determine whether or not each teacher is following the prescriptions.

4. Parent-Child Early Education teachers will establish positive relationships with parents in Saturday School and Home Teaching. Teachers will do this by showing that they respect parents' competencies in teaching children. This will be systematically monitored by the Project Director and periodically by elementary principals and parents.

5. A Parent-Child Early Education Curriculum Guide will be developed by the Project Director and PCEE teachers. The guide which will include performance objectives and a sequence of activities to meet each objective will be integrated into the district

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Early Childhood Curriculum Guide Series already developed for kindergarten and beginning primary levels. Monthly planning charts will also be developed listing the major concepts to be introduced in Saturday School along with a record of each child's progress toward mastery. The Guide will be reviewed for its content validity by an early childhool education specialist and for its appropriateness and feasibility by the PCEE teachers and Project Director

6. Each Parent-Child Early Education teacher will attend at least two inservice sessions per month to learn how to:

   A. Utilize appropriate motivational techniques for environmentally disadvantaged and handicapped pupils.

   B. Accurately identify and work with pupils who have learning problems due to emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, physical handicaps, low intellectual functioning, and mental retardation.

7. Each Parent-Child Early Education teacher will demonstrate appropriate teaching techniques (e.g., reinforcement methods) to parents during Saturday School. The Project Director will determine whether teachers are carrying on this activity through observations of teacher-parent inter-actions during the Saturday School classes.

8. Each Parent-Child Early Education and kindergarten teacher will teach each other's classes at least once during the first year of the program so as to demonstrate the need for, and the ways in which to, coordinate the PCEE and kindergarten programs.

9. Weekly Home Activity Packets that complement the instruction given in Saturday School (as described in the staff activities component) will be developed by the Project Director, Parent-Child Early Education teachers,

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specialists for the Handicapped, and the Project Disseminator. The content validity of these materials will be judged by an early childhood specialist as well as by teachers' reports based on the appropriateness and usability of these materials with PCEE pupils.

10. Parent-Child Early Education teachers will work collaboratively with the Project Director in monthly meetings to develop weekly Home Activity Packets that complement the instruction given in Saturday School.

11. Parent-Child Early Education teachers will work collaboratively with the Project Director in monthly meetings to develop monthly planning charts and a curriculum guide.

With these specific objectives, teachers set their own objectives by setting performance targets at the beginning of the Year. The following is a sample of targets set by teachers and used as a basis for working with staff.

. I would like to help the overanxious parents in better understanding the needs of their children.

. One of my main goals is to give children more opportunity to talk while I listen. I want to give them more spontaneous language experience.

. I want to improve my ability to observe and spot problems.

. To work with two families on child care and what is appropriate behavior for their children.

. To help _____ in his behavior and relationship with others when his mother is present.

. I plan to incorporate more movement-related activities into my home visits. I do not want mothers to conclude that learning is always "at a table."

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- I want to involve parents more in the home visits.
- I want to increase my understanding of the development of the young child.
- I want to help parents become more involved in using the Home Activity Guide by suggesting activities and discussing skill objectives with the parent.
- I want to do more professional reading in the area of early education.
- Give more attention to the quiet children.
- To vary my teaching techniques to allow for more multi-sensory experiences.

Selecting Activities

Activities in developing staff needs are best if the participants have some control over the content of the activity, if the activity involves multi-sensory presentation, and if two-way communication is present to allow for feedback and interaction. Also it is necessary to look at these activities in terms of the kind of objectives. Cognitive objectives probably will be handled by lecture, demonstration or observation activities. Broader objectives dealing with process and affect can be reached through discussions, brainstorming and guided practice.

In describing the activities carried on in inservice development in the Parent-Child Early Education Program, we will look at organizing staff in the beginning of the school year, the process which develops throughout the year with the assistance of our Consultant in Educational Prob-

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lems and our Consultant in Child Development, and time for inservice and organization.

Activities at the Beginning of the School Year

During program Year I, an extensive period of time was used in preparing the staff to give the tests used in the screening procedure. One entire week was devoted to the administration, scoring and interpretation of the Slosson Intelligence Test. Additional time was devoted to the Language Test, the Beery Test of Visual Motor Integration, and the Parent Interview. Additional preservice training during this four-week period consisted of the use of project instruments and rating forms, the curriculum outline and sequence charts of skill development; content and use of instructional materials; development of learning activities for teacher and parent use; and home teaching and working as partners with parents.

During project Year II, a three-week preservice training for teachers included review of test administration and interpretation, use of sequence charts of skills development, work on task analysis, development of learning activities for teacher and parent use, videotapes of Saturday School and home teaching. New staff members were given detailed assistance in developing testing skills, becoming acquainted with materials and using the sequence charts of skill development.

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During project Year III, the preservice training covered a two-week period of time. Since only two staff members were new, we could start our service to children earlier. However, during this preservice period, we were able to develop a written philosophy of early education, revise our sequence chart of skill development, and do more intensified work in task analysis. We learned more about the child who withdraws. Attention was also given to identifying speech problems in children, age four.

Staff Development Throughout the Year

During project Year I, major inservice activities and the approximate per cent of time allotted to each are summarized as follows:

1) Identifying needs of children; discussing appropriate motivational and teaching techniques to meet these needs -- 29% of time

2) Curriculum development including Sequence Charts of Skill Development and corresponding learning activities -- 29% of time

3) Planning and evaluating Home Activity Guides -- 9% of time

4) Team planning for Saturday School and Home Teaching -- 33% of time

In project Year II, there was some change in time allotments due to the fact that the Home Activity Guides were developed, the program was developing, and we could concentrate on needs of individuals.

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The major efforts of staff development are summarized as follows:

1) Identifying needs of children; discussing emotional problems and ways to modify behavior and appropriate teaching techniques for different kinds of learners -- 50% of time.

2) Team planning of the instructional program for Saturday School and Home Teaching -- 40% of time.

3) Formalized staff development activities led by Consultant Specialists in the program -- 10% of time.

Topics for discussion included analyzing a task, programming instruction and developing oral language skills.

Project Year III covered the same time allotments as the previous year with an even greater emphasis on the individual, more questioning of why we do certain things, and a greater desire to know more about child development. In general, a more mature and assured staff was functioning in situations already known to them and was ready to solve new situations.

Inservice Activities Dealing with Educational Problems

The consultant in charge of the Component for Educational Problems has worked with the staff primarily through instruction in testing procedures, diagnosis and programming, task analysis and an analysis of learning. During the three years of staff inservice, the following subjects have been discussed:

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Working with Non-spontaneous Learner
The Gifted Child
Working with the Learning Disabled Child
Art Experiences for "Fours"
Analyzing tasks
Ten sessions dealing with Gross and Fine Motor skills, tracing the development of these skills and appropriate activities to use
Receptive, Associative and Expressive Language Skills

The consultants and the two learning disabilities specialists working in the program have also spent considerable time working with teams of teachers in discussing how to teach certain concepts and what to do for certain children exhibiting difficulties. The support offered by the consultants has aided the teacher in "talking out" and thinking through her problem. The consultants also observe the children with educational problems and then bring concrete suggestions to the teacher for implementation.

Inservice Needs Dealing with Child Development Problems

This component of the program, led by a psychologist and two psychiatric social workers, has as one of its major objectives consultation with teachers. The staff meets with teams of teachers on alternate weeks, spending one hour with each team. The by-product of this approach has been the anticipated growth of the teacher in understanding and working with deviant children and their parents. By providing a continuing opportunity to discuss different

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children, whose problems are quite varied, with the same consultant over a period of many weeks, there is an increased likelihood of understanding the whole child. Besides this, it affords the entire team an occasion to cope with an ongoing problem which may have applicability to events in another classroom at another time. Lastly, it permits an early and cohesive appreciation of a particular family by the consultant, who may confer with the parent at a later date.

This process and relationship developed between the consultant and a team of teachers over a period of at least 18 sessions per year has resulted in a support system for teachers who spend eleven to twelve hours a week teaching in the homes and working with parents and children. In being able to talk about a problem and arrive at ways of dealing with the problem, this process has given the teacher both skill and satisfaction in her role with parents and children.

This component of the program had also presented in-service of a didactic nature. Various subjects discussed include:

What is Normal in Child Development
The Shy Child
The Aggressive Child
The Over-anxious Parent

Time for Inservice

In order to insure time for inservice, it is built into the regular program of the teachers. Teachers in the PCEE program are employed on a twenty hour a week basis. This includes six hours a week spent in Saturday School, eleven hours in home teaching, and a two-hour team meeting. Teachers who work in teams of three in Saturday School centers, meet together in the team meeting to plan teaching activities for Saturday School and home visits and then engage in other staff development activities, as mentioned previously. We usually alternate from week to week in focusing on either educational problems or problems of a behavioral and emotional nature which affect the whole family.

Organization

Various forms of organization are utilized to carry on inservice. The lecture format is used in instructing staff on testing procedures, discussing child development, or any type of program that provides general information. This format is used to some extent, but it accounts for a relatively small part of the inservice period. Demonstration or observation of a skill or activity is also used somewhat. For example, teachers have been involved in art workshops or in activities in which gross and fine motor skills are developed. However, most of the inservice revolves about

large or usually small group discussions, guided practice and brainstorming. The emphasis has been placed on using group processes to further thinking and understanding, as was mentioned in the description of the work of the child development consultants.

Other resources

If at all possible, staff members have been encouraged to participate in meetings and short courses outside the school district dealing in early education. The school district also co-sponsors a yearly conference, "The Crucial Early Years," with the University of Missouri-St. Louis. This conference brings an outstanding authority in early education to keynote the day-and-a-half-long meeting. People from the greater Missouri and Illinois area lead discussions for some 500 to 600 educators on various topics relating to the young child, his parents, and his world.

Inservice for District Teachers in Early Education

As a follow-up to the staff program for the Early Education staff, staff development has been provided to kindergarten and first year primary teachers so that curriculum procedures and changes would follow the program for four year old children. These workshops held at the end of the school year have considered the following

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subjects:

Observing Children Objectively
Working with Emotional Problems
Home Teaching Visits and Working with Parents
Discussion of individual children and analysis of testing information between current and future teachers

Evaluating Results

As indicated previously, inservice programs ought to be built upon demonstrated needs. If objectives have been determined and activities identified to move toward the goal, it should be easy to evaluate the results. The results of the staff development program for the Parent-Child Education program indicate that the various forms of inservice have been successful. Details of specific objective achievement may be found in the final evaluation reports: Project Year I and II, Parent-Child Early Education Program, Title III, Sec. 306 ESEA.

However, statements by the Consultant in Educational Problems and the Consultant for the Emotionally Handicapped contained in the evaluation report Year II summarize the value of the staff development program:

> "Specifically, it was apparent to the consultants that the program's teachers were much more secure in their roles and responsibilities this year than last year. This security was manifested in their self-confidence and in their lack of defensiveness about seeking help from consultants and from each other. Further, their questions were much more sophisticated, reflecting a considerable degree of growth beyond fundamental basic concerns about

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how children learn. Finally, the manner in which they were able to design, implement and evaluate the outcomes of their programs and projects for children reflected a greater degree of competency than in the past years. All in all, as a group, the teaching staff has become rather sophisticated in working with preschool children, both disabled and non-disabled; and they appear to be ready to entertain even more complex levels of information dealing with cognitive and affective aspects of child growth and development."

"The overwhelming majority of referrals discussed with the consultants were initiated by the teacher. The sensitivity and astuteness of the teacher in selecting these cases was unquestionably correct in virtually every instance. By way of attempting to summarize the overall performance of teachers in relation to consultation services, we have separated some of the more basic ingredients in this relationship. Almost all teachers received ratings which placed them at the upper end of the continuum on most dimensions. Even the exceptions to this pattern, teachers who received a moderately low rating on one or another dimension, are generally mitigated by higher ratings on other dimensions. This is especially true for the all-important matter of utilizing the suggestions of the consultant. In all, the teachers were judged to have performed at a near-outstanding level."

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